

MEMORANDUM

To: Agency Directors
Building Contact Persons

From: Helen T. Zeigler, Director
Office of General Services

DATE: April 27, 1999

SUBJECT: Office of General Services Policy – Portable Heaters

The Office of General Services (OGS) has noticed an increase in the number of portable electric heaters in use. In the past, we have had fires causing serious damage from the use of portable heaters. Therefore, OGS is issuing this policy statement for occupants in buildings owned or maintained by OGS.

It is the policy of the Office of General Services to prohibit the use of portable heaters. Building occupants who have environmental temperature difficulties in buildings owned or managed by OGS should call OGS Facilities Management at 734-3308.

We have established this policy because of the obvious fire hazards as well as economical concerns. In addition to being a fire hazard, it has been reported by the State Energy Office that portable heaters may cost the State thousands of dollars a year in energy use. During the winter season, one portable heater can cost the State as much as \$200.

Your support in uniformly banning the use of portable heaters is critical. Please notify employees in your agency and buildings of this policy. During our regular building safety inspections, the OGS Safety Support staff will be available to discuss this policy while monitoring for compliance. If you have any questions concerning this policy, please contact OGS Safety Support at 737-3380. Thank you for your assistance.

SAFETY BULLETIN for **PORTABLE HEATERS**

Remember such heaters use a great deal of power and must have approved plugs and wiring. Furthermore, the heat they give can ignite combustibles if they are placed nearby. This bulletin is intended to provide guidance on the SAFE use of these heaters.

- Look for the UL Mark before purchasing a portable heater. A UL Listing Mark on a product means that representative samples of the product have been tested and evaluated to nationally recognized safety standards with regard to fire, electric shock and related safety hazards.
- The heating elements of portable heaters must be limited to not more than 212degrees F.
- The electrical power source must be evaluated to assure the electrical circuit is sufficient to operate the heater.
- The heating device shall have an over-temperature switch or over-temperature refuse. (The thermostat should automatically shut the unit off when the set temperature is reached).
- Carefully and completely read the operating and safety instructions for the heater you are using.
- Quartz type heaters are recommended. Heaters with open flames or open electrical elements should not be used.
- Use only heaters that have an automatic cut off switch if they are tipped over. If in doubt, do not use the heater.
- Portable heaters must be used on the floor. Never place heaters on cabinets, tables or furniture.
- NEVER use an electric heater in or around standing water unless it is specifically rated for that use.
- Do NOT place portable heaters near exits or in walkways. Portable heaters must not be located in heavily traveled areas.
- Do NOT use any heater if the heater, electrical cord, or plug is damaged.
- Do NOT use an extension cord unless it is rated to handle 1 ¼ times the power draw of the heater and approved for use by an electrician.
- Do NOT place the heater within 3 feet of combustible materials (paper, clothing, curtains, or furniture).
- Do NOT use the heater to warm food or other items or dry wet clothing.
- NEVER leave the heater operating when unattended for extended periods of time. TURN OFF and UNPLUG the heater when leaving for the day.